

# **Disability services guide**

for Helsinki residents

Helsinki



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# 1. Disability services guide for Helsinki residents

This guide presents the main services available for disabled Helsinki residents. The various disability services and support measures support the independence and coping of physically or intellectually disabled people and aim to diminish the restrictions and obstacles caused by the disability in their everyday life.

Additional information and application forms

<https://www.hel.fi/vammaiset/en>

## 2. The services are determined by law

The Act on Disability Services and Assistance determines the services and financial benefits that a municipality can arrange for a disabled person based on this law.

People who have long-term special difficulties with managing usual, everyday activities due to a disability or an illness, are entitled to the services and support measures defined in this law. These services and support measures will be arranged if the disabled person cannot receive adequate and suitable services based on any other law.

Some disability services and support measures are included in a municipal special obligation to provide such services. People with severe disabilities have a subjective right to these services. Some services and support measures determined in the Act on Disability Services and Assistance are dependent on allocated funds, and the local authorities will determine how to allocate these funds.

Intellectually disabled people can also apply for the special services defined in the act concerning the special care of people with intellectual disabilities (Laki kehitysvammaisten erityishuollosta).

Support for housing and finding employment can be arranged based on the Social Welfare Act.

## 3. Applying for a service

Services intended for disabled people can be applied for through the person's local service unit of social work for the disabled. Contact information for these units can be found at the end of this guide.

The applicant's income or wealth will not be taken into consideration when granting these services; the basis is always the hindrance to everyday life caused by a disability or a long-term illness and the need for the service. These services can be applied for all year round.

The assistance and service needs caused by the disability or illness with regard to, for example, housing, transportation or living at home, can be discussed with a social worker. The social worker is an expert in matters concerning the services based on the Act on Disability Services and Assistance and the Intellectual Disability Act. Disability services work together with home services, home services for families with children, hospitals and various organisations, for example.

The medical treatment, medical rehabilitation and home care of disabled people are covered by healthcare services.

Services targeted at families with children include services such as home services for families with children and social guidance for families with children. The family work offered by the home services is defined as temporary work intended to support a family's everyday life. It can be granted due to a family's weakened functional ability, family situation, stress, birth of a new child, disability, or other reason. Social guidance for families with children includes support, guidance and advice for families with children under 16, which are going through different life situations, and in matters related to parenthood and bringing up a child. More information about the services for families with children in Helsinki is available on the Family Support website.

A service plan will be compiled together with the disabled person, in which their overall situation will be assessed, goals will be set and services and the appointed people in charge will be agreed on. Follow-up and evaluation are also a part of the service plan.

## 4. Services for people with severe disabilities

Services and support measures intended for people with severe disabilities are included in the municipal special obligation to arrange services. These cover the following services:

### 4.1 Transport services

Transport services are intended for people with severe disabilities, for whom using public transport services is unreasonably difficult. Transport services can be requested for such trips as work and study trips as well as for trips needed to manage one's affairs and recreational trips.

A client who has been granted transport services will be issued a personal transport service charge card they can use to pay for the rides. The client will make a co-payment for the rides.

The charge card can mainly be used for trips within Helsinki and its neighbouring municipalities. Work and study trips can usually be granted as transport services for people with severe disabilities if their workplace or educational institute is in Helsinki or the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

The transport benefit, a support measure defined in the Social Welfare Act, is part of the support for independent living. It is primarily intended for elderly people whose diminished functional abilities prevent them from using public transport alone or when accompanied by an assistant. The transport benefit defined in the Social Welfare Act is asset- and income-related and case-specific.

### 4.2 Personal aid

The purpose of personal aid is to help a person with severe disabilities to live their own life and make their own choices. One prerequisite for granting this aid is that the person is able to determine the contents and execution method of the assistance they need.

Personal aid refers to the necessary assistance a person with severe disabilities needs at home and outside home, with matters such as:

- daily activities and tasks
- work and studies
- hobbies
- participation in social issues
- maintaining social interactions.

Personal aid includes matters and tasks that the person with severe disabilities would do themselves if they did not have the disability or illness that causes their restrictions. The client's service plan will determine the amount and execution method of this assistance.

Personal aid will primarily be implemented through an 'employer model', which means that the disabled person will choose their assistant themselves and sign an employment agreement with them. The City will provide remuneration for the employee's wages and other necessary costs. The City uses a programme called SuoraTyö for paying the wages of personal aid workers.

The City can grant a service voucher for personal aid, in which case the person with severe disabilities will choose a company from among the City's authorised service providers, which will then arrange an assistant for them. The personal aid service voucher is free of charge to the client.

## 4.3 Apartment modification work

Apartment modification works support a disabled person's independent housing and coping. An apartment's modification works can be remunerated for if the person has severe disabilities and they undisputedly need these modifications to cope with usual everyday tasks. Modification works are only made to a permanent apartment, and the costs remunerated for by disability services must be reasonable. If a person requires institutional care, their apartment will not be modified.

Modification works that are remunerated for include widening the doors, removing thresholds, making ramps, removing a bathtub, modifying fixtures, construction and interior materials, and removing obstacles in the immediate vicinity of the apartment.

## 4.4 Equipment and devices in the apartment

Equipment and devices in the apartment can help a person with severe disabilities cope independently at home. These could be devices such as permanent lifting equipment installations, stair lift, alarm systems for the hearing impaired and an electronic opening system for the front door. Reasonable costs for equipment and devices in the apartment will be remunerated for in full.

When making the decision about remuneration for equipment and devices, the person's degree of disability will be taken into consideration, as well as their ability to live in the apartment, alternative solutions, the permanence of the apartment, the suitability of the equipment and reasonability of the costs. Usually, the municipality will provide people with severe disabilities with such equipment free of charge. In such cases, the municipality is liable for the installation and maintenance costs. If the client themselves acquires the equipment or device, they are also liable for any potential maintenance and insurance costs.

## 4.5 Sheltered housing

Sheltered housing for severely disabled people includes an apartment and housing services that enable independent living. This service is available to people with severe disabilities who, due to their disability or illness require a great deal of help in their everyday life, at different times of the day.

Sheltered housing for severely disabled people can be provided in the client's own home, in assisted living units or at a sheltered home, for example. Sheltered housing always includes the necessary services for coping with day-to-day life. These services can include such services as assistance with mobility, dressing oneself, personal hygiene, meals and cleaning.

Sheltered housing provided at the client's home is often implemented as cooperation between personal aid, as defined in the Act on Disability Services and Assistance, and home care.

Sheltered housing for severely disabled people is also provided at sheltered homes or assisted group living units, either as the City's own service, a purchased service or with a service voucher. The client will pay for the rent and all other costs of their daily life. The service is free of charge for the clients for whom the service is necessary due to their disability.

## 4.6 Day activities

See 7.5 Day-time activities and employment support

# 5. Other services in accordance with the Act on Disability Services and Assistance

Some services and support measures determined in the Act on Disability Services and Assistance are dependent on allocated funds. Receiving remuneration is, as such, always discretionary and dependent on factors such as the client's need, reasonable costs and available funds.

The financial support measures determined in the Act on Disability Services and Assistance can also be applied for retrospectively, within six months of the date the costs were accrued. However, the best course of action is to apply for financial support measures before the expenses to be remunerated for occur.

## 5.1 Equipment, machines and devices needed for daily tasks

Based on the Act on Disability Services and Assistance, the expenses accrued for acquiring equipment, machines and devices necessary for transport, communication or other tasks due to a person's disability can be remunerated for when they are not included in medical rehabilitation. Remuneration can be granted for a car, auxiliary devices installed in a car or household appliances, for example.

At most, half of the reasonable acquisition costs will be reimbursed. The remuneration for car acquisition expenses and auxiliary device installation costs have been determined separately. The City of Helsinki only grants support for acquiring a car when it is needed daily, for example due to work, studies or transport of a disabled child.

## 5.2 Adaptation coaching

Adaptation coaching can include advice, guidance and coaching. Adaptation coaching is organised individually or in groups. Services such as communication teaching, mobility guidance and housing trials are organised as disability services.

The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela), insurance companies and various organisations also organise adaptation coaching.

At adaptation coaching courses, participants practise social skills, utilise peer support and attempt to mitigate the limitations created by the disability on their everyday life. Adaptation coaching is free of charge to the participants, excluding the co-payment of their transport costs.

## 5.3 Additional clothing costs

Additional clothing costs can be remunerated for as disability services, with an individual needs-based decision. Costs can mostly be remunerated for if tailored clothing is needed due to the disability, modifications are needed to regular clothing or the disability or illness causes excessive wear and tear of clothing.

## 6. Services in accordance with the Act on Intellectual Disabilities

The services for intellectually disabled people are determined in the act concerning the special care of intellectually disabled people. The purpose of special care is to promote the coping of intellectually disabled people with their everyday life, as well as their livelihood and adaptation to society. It also strives to secure the necessary treatment and care. The Act on Intellectual Disabilities highlights the importance of supporting and facilitating the right of self-determination.

A person whose development or mental activity is hindered or disrupted due to a congenital or developmental illness, defect or injury, can apply for services intended for intellectually disabled people. The prerequisite is that the person cannot be granted the services they need based on another law.

The Helsinki special care district is in charge of special care in Helsinki. A client relationship with special care can be established by contacting the disability services social worker. The executive group of special care will make the decision on accepting the person as a client. Next, a special care programme will be compiled for the customer. Swedish-language services should be applied for via Kårkulla joint municipal authority.

An intellectually disabled person is also entitled to the services defined in the Act on Disability Services and Assistance, if they are adequate and appropriate for them. The Act on Disability Services and Assistance takes priority over the Act on Intellectual Disabilities.

### 6.1 Social work

A social worker provides advice, guidance and information on available services. The services must be applied for with a written disability services application or verbally from a local disability services social worker.

## 6.2 The outpatient clinic for the intellectually disabled serves all Helsinki residents in need of special care

The outpatient clinic for the intellectually disabled provides expertise, research, guidance and advisory services related to intellectual disabilities and is in charge of planning rehabilitation. The purpose is to promote the functional abilities of the intellectually disabled and to support their participation in society. Services provided by the outpatient clinic for the intellectually disabled are free of charge.

## 6.3 Granting the right to free daycare due to rehabilitation

Free-of-charge daycare can be granted to intellectually disabled children, if it is included in the child's holistic rehabilitation plan as its own section. A decision on daycare for rehabilitative causes is applied for and based on a doctor's statement that explicitly states the rehabilitative significance of daycare for the client in question. The decision on providing daycare for rehabilitative reasons will be recorded in the client's valid special care programme.

## 6.4 Afternoon and holiday care for school children

School pupils from 3rd to 10th grade are entitled to afternoon and holiday care organised by the Education Division. Care services are available across Helsinki.

Actual care is not arranged as special care, but if this service is included in the special care programme, it is free of charge. The parents must ensure that the care service is recorded in the special care programme when the child starts third grade.

More information about the afternoon and holiday care of children requiring special support is available through the Education Division.

## 6.5 Housing services for intellectually disabled people

The City of Helsinki has its own housing units and sheltered housing for intellectually disabled people and, additionally, housing services are purchased from service providers across Helsinki and elsewhere in Finland. The Kårkulla joint municipal authority maintains housing units in Helsinki and elsewhere in Uusimaa for Swedish-speaking clients.

Housing services are arranged in group homes, apartment groups, family care and supported housing units as well as by supporting independent housing. In some units, staff members are present 24/7 while in others they are around during the day. Supported housing units are separate apartments where workers visit according to a certain schedule, based on the client's needs. Housing services charge rent and meal payments to the client as well as electricity, sauna, detergent and laundry fees.

Family care means arranging treatment and care at the family carer's private home or the client's own home. The City will sign a commission agreement with the family carer or agree on arranging family care with a private family care provider.

The City of Helsinki no longer has its own institutional services for intellectually disabled people, but some are acquired as purchased services.

Housing services, family care and institutional care can be arranged as short-term or long-term services.

## 6.6 Work and day activities

See 7.5 Day-time activities and employment support

# 7. Other services for disabled people or people with long-term illnesses

## 7.1 Support for informal care

Informal care refers to the treatment and care of an elderly, disabled or ill person, in their home with the help of a family member or a loved one of the person in question.

Support for informal care consists of services given to the care recipient, remuneration for the caretaker, leave, and other support services for informal care.

New clients over the age of 65 can apply for the service through the Senior Info telephone consultation service, and clients under 65 years old must apply for it through the service units of social work for the disabled.

The support is applied for with a form. A doctor's statement, describing the functional abilities of the applicant, should be included with it. The application must be sent to disability services social work with the doctor's statement. After receiving the application, a social instructor of support for informal care will contact the client and visit their home to make a care and service plan. After this, they will make a decision on support for informal care.

Support for informal care can be granted if the person requires care or other assistance, due to a functional impairment, illness, disability or another similar reason and if that care can be arranged at the person's own home. An agreement on the support for informal care will be made with the informal carer.

## 7.2 Short-term care

Short-term care is arranged on informal carer's days of leave, based on the Act on Support for Informal Care. Short-term care can also be organised as a discretionary service. Short-term care is available in housing units and as institutional and family care. Informal carer's leave can also be implemented through a home service and with the help of hourly carers and substitute informal carers.

The purpose of short-term care is to allow for days off for a person caring for an intellectually disabled or physically disabled person at home. At the same time, this helps support a disabled person's independence from their childhood home.

The client and their family will evaluate the need for short-term care and a suitable short-term care place together with a social worker. A fee confirmed by the Social Services and Health Care Division will be charged for short-term care.

## 7.3 Support person services

The service is intended for a disabled person who requires support for creating and maintaining social relations or for their independence and development. The aim is to increase the disabled person's chances to participate in hobbies and recreational activities, for example. The customer must personally find a support person. A fee will be paid to the support person and their expenses will be reimbursed.

## 7.4 Social guidance

Social advisors of disability services offer support and guidance to disabled people of different ages who live at home, as well as their family members. Social instructors support disabled people with managing their everyday life and with matters related to their work, leisure time and social relationships. Social guidance is planned, usually temporary work that supports the client's independent coping.

## 7.5 Day-time activities and employment support

### 7.5.1 Day activities in compliance with the Act on Disability Services and Assistance

Day activities in compliance with the Act on Disability Services and Assistance are organised for working age (under 65-year-old) severely

disabled people who cannot participate in work activities as defined in the Social Welfare Act and whose income mainly consists of benefits paid on the basis of their illness or inability to work.

The objective of day activities is to support both physical and psychological well-being, promote social interactions and facilitate participation in community and social activities. Day activities also provide peer support and facilitate living at home, and it is also a way to support the person's family members and decrease the need for other care.

The content of day activities is planned based on the participants' needs and functional abilities. Day activity facilities usually offer a meal service. A co-payment share of meals and transport will be charged to the client.

## 7.5.2 Work and day activities for intellectually disabled people

The work and day activities for intellectually disabled people are intended for intellectually disabled people who have completed comprehensive schooling. The activities strive to promote social participation and support the client in becoming a part of the surrounding society as an equal citizen. The activities support self-expression, the right of self-determination and interactions. The participants will get to practise skills needed for becoming an independent adult.

The activities promoting work life participation coach the client in working life. Participatory, customer- and goal-oriented activities are arranged as group guidance. In addition to the group guidance, individual work coaching is also held, with the final goal of finding paid employment.

Adult education and preparatory training support the independence of young people and adults and prepare them for further studies and employment.

## 7.5.3 Services for supported employment strive to find paid employment for the clients

The prerequisite for the service is that the client is over 18 years of age, lives in Helsinki and is intellectually disabled, has an autism spectrum disorder, other neuropsychiatric diagnosis or other disability.

Work coaching includes reviewing and developing working life capabilities, finding a job together with the customer, induction support at the workplace and support visits agreed together with the employer. Coaching is given individually and its goal is always finding employment for the client. Depending on the client's prerequisites, they may find a job right away or through a job trial period. For more information, please contact the local service unit of your disability services social work or call the supported employment service directly, tel. 310 69597.

## 7.5.4 Employment support and social rehabilitation

The work activities of the Social Services and Health Care Division are intended for the long-term unemployed and individuals with reduced work ability. The purpose of the service is to support and increase well-being, life management skills, work ability and functional capacity. Sometimes another option is to determine the client's work ability and guide the client towards rehabilitation or retirement. You can also access the services via the multidisciplinary joint service for promoting employment, i.e. TYP Helsinki, or your local adult social work's service point.

## 7.6 Reducing or waiving a customer fee

The fee can be reduced or waived, if the payment would reduce the customer's prerequisites for subsistence (Act on Client Charges in Healthcare and Social Welfare, Section 11).

The discount or waiving of a fee can be applied for with a free-form application. It, along with appended income and expense receipts, should be submitted to the client fees and collection unit. The receipts for income and expenses must be provided for the previous two months.

The application must also state the time period the reduction or exemption is being applied for, as well as which service the application is for. The reduction or waiving of fees can be applied for for a period of no more than 12 months.

The decision to reduce or waive fees is usually applied for from the beginning of the application month. The application must be signed.

The reduction or exemption cannot be applied for retrospectively and individual, unpaid invoices cannot be erased.

A basis for reducing or waiving the customer fee is if the client has received regular social assistance for at least six months or if they are otherwise unable to pay.

## 8. Other services for disabled people or people with long-term illnesses

### 8.1 Kela benefits

For more information on Kela benefits or allowances, visit

<https://www.kela.fi/web/en/disability>

Disability benefits include disability allowance for persons under 16 years, disability allowance for persons aged 16 years or over and care allowance for pensioners. A person participating in rehabilitation may receive rehabilitation allowance or rehabilitation allowance for young persons. Kela can grant a diverse range of rehabilitation services to people who need them due to a disability or illness. EU disability card can also be applied for through Kela.

Kela also provides interpreting services for people who need them due to their disability, such as hearing or visually impaired people or people with speech impairment. Interpretation services are also available as remote services.

### 8.2 A parking permit for disabled people and exemption from basic vehicle tax

A disabled person's parking permit is personal. The permit can be granted if the prerequisites for granting one are met and confirmed with a doctor's statement. The permit can be used in the vehicle the permit holder drives or a vehicle that is used to transport them. The disabled person's parking permit is valid in all European Union Member States. You can also apply for exemption from basic vehicle tax at the same time.

Further information is available on Finnish Transport and Communications Agency's website:

[www.traficom.fi](http://www.traficom.fi) > [Services > Applying for disabled parking permits and tax exemption](#)

## 8.3 Car tax refund

A disabled person or their family members may receive a car tax refund for a vehicle that will be used by the disabled person or to transport a disabled family member and that will be registered for the first time in Finland.

The tax refund must be applied for within six months of the car being registered in the disabled person's name. The decision can be applied for before acquiring or registering the car.

Further information on the website of Finnish Tax Administration:

[www.vero.fi](http://www.vero.fi) > [Henkilöasiakkaat](#) > [Auto](#) > [Autoverotus](#) > [Autoveronpalautus invalideille \(in Finnish\)](#)

# Service units of the Social work for the disabled

**Guidance and advice** Mon–Fri 8:15–16:00 tel. 09 3102 3100

## **Clients under 18 years old in eastern and northern areas**

Itäkatu Family Centre  
PO Box 6730, 00099 City of Helsinki  
Itäkatu 11, 00930 Helsinki

## **Clients under 18 years old in southern and western areas and Swedish-speaking clients anywhere in the city**

Kallio Family Centre  
PO Box 6450, 00099 City of Helsinki  
Toinen linja 4 C, 00530 Helsinki

## **Disabled and intellectually disabled clients over 18 years old in the southern area and intellectually disabled clients over 18 years old in the eastern area**

Social work for the disabled, southern service unit  
Kalasatama Health and Well-being Centre  
PO Box 6420, 00099 City of Helsinki  
Työpajankatu 14, 6th floor, 00580 Helsinki

## **Clients over 18 years old of eastern disability services**

Social work for the disabled, eastern service unit  
PO Box 7380, 00099 City of Helsinki  
Kahvikuja 3, 00980 Helsinki

## **Disabled and intellectually disabled clients over 18 years old of western and northern areas**

Social work for the disabled, western and northern service unit.  
PO Box 7980, 00099 City of Helsinki  
Ala-Malmin tori 2, 00700 Helsinki

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